



Factors Influencing Thai Customer Loyalty Towards a Thailand Based Airlines Company การศึกษาปัจจัยที่มีผลต่อความภักดีของผู้โดยสารชาวไทยที่มีต่อสายการบินระดับชาติ

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การวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาปัจจัยสำคัญที่ต่อความภักดี และค้นหาปัจจัยที่มีอิทธิพลต่อความภักดีของผู้โดยสารชาวไทยที่มีต่อสายการบินแห่งชาติ งานวิจัยนี้ได้สำรวจปัจจัยที่มีอิทธิพลต่อความจงรักภักดีของลูกค้าที่ใช้บริการในด้าน ความพึงพอใจของลูกค้า ประสบการณ์เชิงอารมณ์ การสื่อสารแบบปากต่อปากบนสื่ออิเล็กทรอนิกส์ และความมีชื่อเสียงของแบรนด์ งานวิจัยนี้ได้วิเคราะห์ประชากรและกลุ่มตัวอย่างประชากรไทยที่เคยใช้บริการสายการบินแห่งชาติ ทั้งนี้มีจำนวนตัวอย่างที่เข้าร่วมตอบแบบสอบถามออนไลน์ทั้งหมด จำนวน 424 ตัวอย่าง โดยใช้วิธีการสุ่มตัวอย่างแบบตามความสะดวกในการดำเนินการวิจัย ข้อมูลที่ได้ถูกวิเคราะห์โดยใช้รูปแบบการวิเคราะห์โมเดลสมการโครงสร้าง เพื่อยืนยันความเหมาะสมของโมเดลและการพิสูจน์ทฤษฎี ผลจากการวิจัยและศึกษาเผยให้เห็นว่า ความมีชื่อเสียงของแบรนด์มีอิทธิพลมากที่สุดต่อความภักดีของลูกค้าที่ใช้บริการที่มีต่อสายการบินแห่งชาติ นอกจากนี้ ความมีชื่อเสียงของแบรนด์ยังเป็นตัวกำหนดความภักดีของลูกค้า ในขณะที่เดียวกันพบว่า ปัจจัยทั้งหมดยังมีผลกระทบอย่างมีนัยสำคัญต่อความภักดีของลูกค้าที่ใช้บริการ และเนื่องจากงานวิจัยนี้ได้ศึกษาเฉพาะตัวอย่างประชากรไทยที่เคยใช้บริการสายการบินแห่งชาติ เท่านั้น มุมมองของตัวอย่างอาจเคยมีประสบการณ์ที่ดีต่อการใช้บริการของสายการบินแบรนด์อื่น ๆ ดังนั้นอาจมีความเป็นไปได้ที่จะศึกษาเพิ่มเติมกับกลุ่มตัวอย่างที่มีประสบการณ์ในการใช้บริการแบรนด์อื่น ซึ่งผลงานวิจัยในนี้อาจมีประโยชน์และส่วนช่วยให้องค์กรเข้าใจมุมมองแนวความคิดของลูกค้ามากขึ้น และสามารถนำไปประยุกต์ใช้ในการบริหารความสัมพันธ์ของลูกค้า

คำสำคัญ : ความพึงพอใจของลูกค้า ; ประสบการณ์เชิงอารมณ์ ; ความมีชื่อเสียงของแบรนด์ ; สื่อสารแบบปากต่อปากบนสื่ออิเล็กทรอนิกส์ ; ความภักดี ; สายการบิน



ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is to determine the key factors influencing to loyalty towards Thailand based airlines company and to identify factors influencing Thai customer loyalty. This research project conducts a survey examining factors influencing customer loyalty in which relates to customer satisfaction, emotional experience, Electronic Word of Mouth and brand reputations of Thailand based airlines company. The population and sample size studies are Thai customers, who experienced in flying with Thailand based airlines. The samples (n = 424) were collected from online questionnaires by applying a convenience sampling method. The data analysis was examined by structural equation modeling as for confirming the model's appropriation and for testing the hypotheses. The research's results suggested that brand reputations strongly influenced to customer loyalty towards the demand of service in Thailand based airlines. In addition, brand reputations determined customer loyalty, whereas all factors also significantly influenced to to customer loyalty towards the demand of airline service. This research specifically analyzed brand loyalty of Thai customers, who might have alternative experience in flying with other airlines only with a particular Thailand based airline. As such, the future research might highlight the customers' experiences in exploring other international branding airlines. The research applications will be helpful for promoting a better understanding between the airline business company/the owner and the customers. Moreover, some findings relating to factors influencing to customer loyalty in the national airline business can improve effective management of customer relations of the airline company.

Keywords : Customer Satisfaction ; Emotional Experience ; Brand Reputation ; Electronic Word of Mouth ; Loyalty ; Airlines

Introduction

On a worldwide scale, the escalating number of companies in airline businesses around the world creates a highly competitive environment and is enormously intended in the market (Mutalib et al., 2020). As a result, from continually progressive advancement in the worldwide economy, that included airline businesses gained lucrativeness, full development in terms of employment which has better management and proficiency in controlling cost and gaining positive effect from escalating massively in demand around the globe for air transportation (Yahya, Harun and Roslan, 2019). The statistical study report revealed an annual increasing in air traffic passenger demand across the globe between 2006 till 2020 (IATA, 2018). In 2019, the air traffic passenger demand has approximate grown by 4.2 percent from previous year and the projections from the growth in demand is 4.1 percent in 2020 (IATA, 2018).

The growth in demand of the air travel industry in Asia is greater than in the United States of America (USA) or Europe because of its prominence expansion in the middle class and dramatic growth in the Asian economy (Yadav and Dhingra, 2019). Countries such as Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia and Singapore have growth in tourism industry which is fueled to draw enormous passengers from other countries around the globe and the airlines have developed new route flights to provide efficient services in terms of connectivity (The ASEAN Post, 2019).

One of the major airlines in Thailand operates domestic and international flights around the world. This Thailand based airline has the top level in any featured aviation activity and has word of mouth with efficient technical and engineering services carried from their own aircraft fleet. Thailand based airlines has privilege member account through which they aim to increase the rate of active members and draw new



members into their program. According to these attractive rationales described, the airlines is a perfect subject to evaluate the efficient factors that influence customer loyalty towards Thailand based airlines company. The magnitude of customer loyalty can be overwhelmed at present for a pure competitive business around the world (Chonsalasin, Jomnonkwao and Ratanavaraha, 2020). Customer emotional experience is another necessary factor that has an impact on customer loyalty, the researchers added. Previous researchers frequently studied that increasing positive experiences are necessary in initiating the satisfaction and loyalty in the service sector (Hasan, Khan, and Farooqi, 2019). In addition, the dependable impact of a firm's brand reputation is described on assorted kind of customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, retentiveness and word-of mouth behavior (Chonsalasin et al., 2020). In the research, the researcher adapted the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Model (SEM) which employed to verify the validity and reliability of the model and examine the influence among variables.

This research and its conceptual framework have been developed from the studying of theoretical frameworks in previous research regarding the impact of positive emotional experiences on eWOM generation and loyalty (Serra-Cantalops, Ramon-Cardona and Salvi, 2018). The researcher has applied the framework to studies the Thai customers who have experienced travelling with Thailand based airlines and availed its services. The researcher addressed the study towards Thais because the secondary data from Thailand based airline's Annual Report showed Thai customer trend of traveling by airlines has tremendously increased both towards domestic and international destinations. In addition, the research is further aligned with the intermedia airline booking website which reported Thai traveling trend is shifting more towards premium airlines booking and upgrading the seats for better service and comfort. Therefore, this research would also benefit management and marketers of Thailand based airlines to identify and understand the potential factors that influences customer loyalty towards their airline and further resulting to designing appropriate marketing strategies.

Objective

This research investigates and determine factors influencing customer loyalty towards Thailand based airlines. The objective of this research is to identify and analyze factor that contributes and has influences on Thai customer loyalty towards Thailand based Airlines. Also, the research is conducted in order to provide recommendation on marketing strategies to marketers of Thailand based airlines. Therefore, hypotheses are constructed as shown in Figure 1. This research would benefit management and marketers of Thailand based airlines to identify and understand the potential factors that influences customer loyalty towards their airline.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction refers to a person's feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparative relation of the service level of expectations before and after using the service or consumption (Kotler, 2000 ; Mei, Li and Li, 2017). Customer satisfaction can protect firms and help a firm to retain their customers as they have a relationship between customer satisfaction and brand reputation. Evidence from prior research indicated that customer satisfaction has a relationship with brand reputation (Winit and Kantabutra, 2017; Serra-Cantalops et al., 2018).



Brand Reputation

Corporate reputation has essentially affected the customers' perceptions with any particular company's goods and services quality (Mas-Ruiz, Sancho-Esper and Sellers-Rubio, 2016). It is important for service sectors to point out the effect of brand reputation after customers use the service, such as customer satisfaction or loyalty (Helm, Garnefeld and Tolsdorf, 2009 ; Panda, Pandey, Bennett and Tian, 2019). Several researchers have profound that the reputation of a firm can influence customer loyalty (Ozkan, Suer, Keser and Kocakoc, 2019). A positive firm reputation tends to have an opportunity to decrease customers' perceived risk and generate higher degree of customer commitment towards the firm (Hjort and Lantz, 2016) and influence customer loyalty intentions (Marcos and Coelho, 2018). Therefore, it is shown a relationship of hypothesis between brand reputation and brand loyalty towards Thailand based airlines company.

Loyalty

Ganiyu (2017) highlighted that customer satisfaction significantly influences customer loyalty. The findings from (Biscaia, Rosa, Moura and Sarrico, 2017) identified that customers who are satisfied intent to repeat purchase of a specific brand (product or service) and that particular groups were becoming more frequent users rather than customers who have unsatisfactory experience defined as relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty. Customer loyalty has many different meanings to define and the most relevant ones were two dimensions for instance behavioral and attitudinal (Huang, 2017; Nyadzayo, Matanda and Rajaguru, 2018 ; Cen and Li, 2019 ; Akroush and Mahadin, 2019). The central of all definitions focused on customer's intention to repeat purchase from the same firm.

H₁: Customer satisfaction has a significant influence on brand reputation.

H₂: Customer satisfaction has a significant influence on customer loyalty.

H₃: Brand Reputation has a significant influence on customer loyalty.

Emotional Experiences

While prior researchers have emphasized that emotional experiences, such as apprehensiveness can inspire applicant thoughtfulness and behavior during the selective procession (Yari Zanganeh, Hariri and Babalhavaeji, 2016). Emotions can be mediators of consumer reaction (Kim, Chua, Lee, Boo and Han, 2016). The positive emotional experiences were factors showing a positive connection to customer satisfaction and the relationship between positive emotion and customer satisfaction which is revealed in several research papers (Jandavath and Byram, 2016; Ali, Hussain and Omar, 2016; Ladhari, Souiden and Dufour, 2017 ; Hosany, Prayag, Veen, Huang and Deesukatgam, 2017).

In terms of a connection between emotional experience and reputation. Customers' emotional experiences provide two aspects, which are positive and negative responses to the brand's product and service while customers have experience from it (Torres and Ronzoni, 2018). Mostly, customers make decisions to buy an airline ticket with a specific brand because they have had an experience with that airline or they have a positive perception with the service from the service. Then the hypotheses shall be determined as followed:

H₄: Emotional experiences have a significant influence on customer satisfaction.

H₅: Emotional experiences have a significant influence on brand reputation.

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM)

As part of traditional word of mouth, it was the characteristics of interpersonal communication in several topics of commercial content such as companies, products and brands. When communicator use internet to pass information in forms of written text, image or even movie through social media (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube etc.), it represents as an electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and called online reviews,



online recommendations or online opinions (Erkan and Evans, 2016). Consumers are main drivers of electronic word of mouth based on perception of that good and service, then consumers mostly share or write review on their experience by generating reviews such as satisfaction or dissatisfaction towards that good or services (Kudeshia and Kumar, 2017 ; Zhang, Abound Omran and Cobanoglu, 2017; Moriuchi and Takahashi, 2016 ; Yu, Kumar Roy, Quazi, Nguyen and Han, 2017)). There is a relationship between satisfactory and positive word of mouth that many researchers have concluded (Liat, Mansori, Chuan and Imrie, 2017 ; Hosany *et al.*, 2017 ; Thakur, 2019).

H₆: Customer satisfaction has a significant influence on electronic word-of-mouth.

Relationship between eWOM and loyalty; Social media context are nearly linked to brand image that are impacting customers' loyalty and loyal customers were the ones who gave positive recommendations about that brand through social media. Interestingly, most social media users have information about eWOM, which is an important point as information can influence customer loyalty (Park, 2020). The brand reputation is vital as it can escalate the privilege of social media usefulness and eWOM that impact customers intention during purchasing decisions (Farzin and Fattahi, 2018 ; Ghorbanzadeh and Saeednia, 2018). The consumer is likely having impact on the firm that has pleasant brand reputation and Huete-Alcocer (2017) reported as when customers give positive reviews, it impacts in a positive way on brand reputation. Thus, the hypotheses shall be determined as followed:

H₇: Electronic word-of-mouth has a significant influence on customer loyalty.

H₈: Electronic word-of-mouth has a significant influence on brand reputation.

Previous researches have confirmed the relationship of positive emotional experience of customers having an impact on electronic word-of-mouth in terms of online review (Serra-Cantalops *et al.*, 2018; Mohammed and Al-Swidi, 2019). Thus, the company or industry tries to create positive experience and unforgettable positive memories for customers because it impacts them with positive recommendations back to the company (Mahapatra and Mishra, 2017).

H₉: Emotional experiences have a significant influence on electronic word-of-mouth.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is developed from studying the theoretical frameworks related to the research. It is adopted from the theoretical model of the study of factors influencing customer loyalty towards Thailand based airlines company (Serra-Cantalops *et al.*, 2018). This study has developed nine hypotheses to test the correlations among the five constructs of customer satisfaction, brand reputation, loyalty, emotional experience and electronic word of mouth. In addition, customer satisfaction, brand reputation and electronic word of mouth as mediators to test the role of both emotional experience to loyalty.

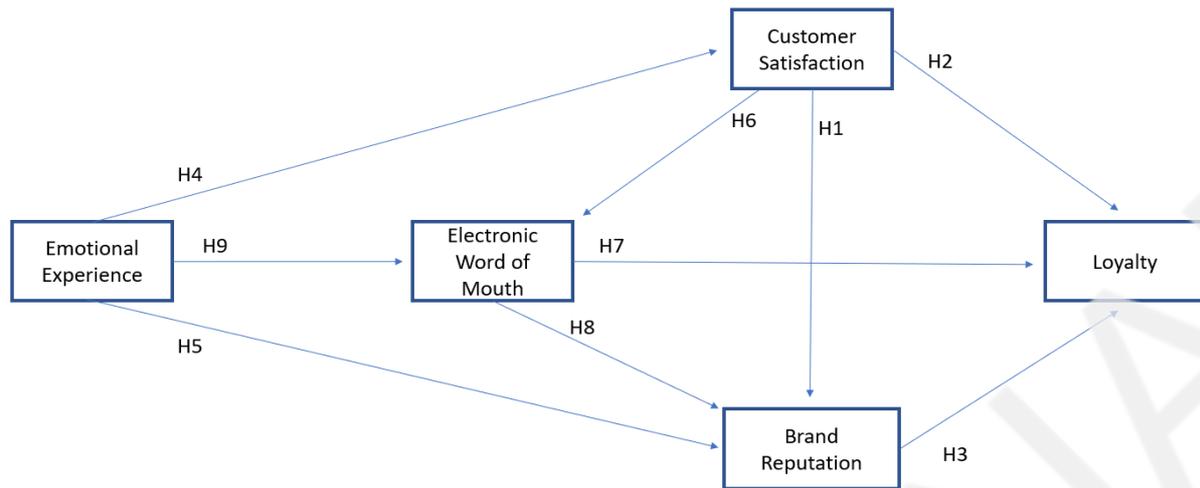


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Research Framework and Methodology

Methodology

The research applied a quantitative method to test the hypotheses. Due to confidentiality and data protection, the researcher has suppressed the actual identity of the participating Airlines company and relabeled as 'Thailand based airlines'. Furthermore, the researcher developed research questions and used social network platforms such as Line, Facebook and Messenger to distribute online questionnaires through target group. The target group emphasizes on Thais who have experiences from the services by Thailand based airlines. The data from target population has studied on the factors that influences consumer loyalty in the specific field of the Thailand based airline's services. The questionnaire was divided into three parts. First are the screening questions to assess the target respondents who uses Thailand based airlines for traveling. The second is a five-points Likert scale questions utilized to determine the link of five variables which focus on studying the hypotheses by the level of degree which is initiated by strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Lastly are the demographic questions to collect personal information from the target respondents e.g. gender, age, income, and occupation.

Target Population

The target population of this research was all Thais who had flown with Thailand based airlines at least once a year in the past. The researcher focuses on Thais because the data from Thailand based airlines annual report showed Thai customer trend to transport by airlines increasing continuously in both travel to domestic and international destinations. The study is also aligned with the intermedia airline booking website reported Thai consumer trend more towards booking premium airlines and upgrade their seat for better service and comfort.

Sample Size

The sample size is based on the proportion of Thailand based airline's passengers which is significant to gain representation by driven Structural Equation Model (SEM) technique suggested by Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson and Tatham (2006). A-priori Sample Size Calculator for Structural Equation Models from danielsoper website by setting up the number of observed and latent variables in the model. There were 5 latent variables, 21 observed variables with a probability level at 0.05. After the calculated result was recommended, the minimum sample size was to detect the effect is 376 respondents. A total of 452



respondents participated in the survey have various demographic profiles. After screening the surveys, all 424 respondents are qualified to be used in this research. This research studies on Thais who have experience with Thailand based airlines services.

Research Instruments

On the side of pilot test, researcher has collected data from 40 respondents to assure the reliability by utilizing Cronbach's alpha analysis to reassure that the questionnaire has a high reliability level to comply with the standard acceptance. The questionnaire continues to collect 424 respondents from online channels by applying the convenience sampling method and non-probability sampling method to gather data. The research model has been tested using several techniques as SPSS Amos version 26 were applied to analyze the collected data. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was developed for the validation test of the results to assure the data fit with the conceptual framework in this research. The measurement model fit was assessed to test the overall fit with the data and ensure the validity and reliability of the model. Finally, the Structural Equation Model (SEM) was used to analyze the influences among variables.

Sampling Technique

The online questionnaire survey was distributed according to a non-probability sampling method which utilized convenience and snowball sampling to collect the raw data from Thai's who had service experience with Thailand based airlines which is an appropriate characteristic of the target respondents. The questionnaire hyperlink was distributed to people randomly through online channels with comfortable accessibility of researcher's affiliated social network platforms such as Line, Facebook and Messenger. This is the easiest way to distribute questionnaires and reach wider range of the target group as the respondents would mostly continue to share the link of the questionnaire to their friend or their social network account.

Pre-Test

Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient is used to check the reliability level of collected data, researchers applied pre-testing which was included in the questionnaire. Cronbach's Alpha analysis performed the reliability test of each variable when the number of respondents reached 40 responses. The pilot study used for the reliability test by executing the SPSS program and the result showed Cronbach's Alpha of each variable was greater than 0.70, this measure implies that the questionnaire is acceptable and highly reliable as the standard required for the reliability test (Hair et al., 2006). The Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient falls under the range in between 0.740 to 0.981 as the result is shown in Table 1. Therefore, it was confirmed that the questionnaire used in this research was achieved through the standard requirement of reliability test.

Table 1 Reliability Test (Consistency of the scales test N=40)

Variables	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Customer Experience (Ex)	6	0.892
Customer Satisfaction (S)	4	0.770
Electronic Word of Mouth (EWM)	5	0.981
Brand Reputation (R)	3	0.740
Loyalty (L)	3	0.917



Result and Discussion

Demographic Factors

The questionnaire was completed with demographic information of the respondents. This paper showed the results of 424 respondents' demographic profile in Table 2. Female contains the highest percentage of gender representing 81.6%. Age of between 26-30 years old (33%) had the most percentage of respondents. In terms of monthly income level, the greatest percentage range was 20,001–30,000 THB (51.2%). Majority of the respondents were private company officers or official employees (82.8%). In terms of frequency of traveling with Thailand based airlines, most respondents select and use Thailand based airlines service 1-2 times per year (45.5%) followed by 3-4 times per year (31.6%).

Table 2 Demographic Information

Demographics Behavior Data (N=424)		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	346	81.6%
	Male	78	18.4%
Age	20 years old or under	27	6.4%
	21 - 25 years old	107	25.2%
	26 - 30 years old	140	33%
	31 - 35 years old	72	17%
	36 - 40 years old	59	13.9%
	41 years old and above	19	4.5%
Income per month	Less than 10,000 THB	15	3.5%
	10,001 – 20,000 THB	119	28.1%
	20,001 – 30,000 THB	217	51.2%
	30,001 – 40,000 THB	39	9.2%
	40,001 – 50,000 THB	26	6.1%
	50,001 THB and above	8	1.9%
Occupation	Private Company Officer	351	82.8%
	Government Officer	42	9.9%
	Business Owner	13	3.1%
	Unemployment	4	0.9%
	Others	14	3.3%
Frequency of travel with Thailand based airlines	1-2 times/year	193	45.5%
	3-4 times/year	134	31.6%
	5-6 times/year	25	5.9%
	7-8 times/year	33	7.8%
	9 times/year and above	39	9.2%

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

CFA was used to assess the convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement model. To test a specific measurement model and provide the convergent validation test to confirm the data fit with the conceptual model. CFA tested the data quality which included the result of the factor loading, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The results of CFA indicated that all the item-factor loadings were larger than 0.5 and T-value < 0.05 as statistically significant, which provided

evidence of convergent validity for the latent constructs. AVE > 0.5, and CR ≥ 0.7 (Hair et al, 2006) as reported in Table 3.

The discriminant validity was evaluated by testing between variables of every construct by calculating the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) recommended by Hair et al, (2006). The variables should be higher than the covariant relation between the variables in the model. All investigated constructs meet the discriminant validity requirement as confirmed in Table 4.

The confirmatory factor analysis resulted in the elimination of several individual items because of low factor loading or high residuals (Bryne, 2010). Presented in Table 5 as the result of a reasonable fit of data to the five variable measurement model based on multiple fit indices. The overall indices were higher than the criteria that satisfies the acceptable fit for the theoretical model of study.

Table 3 Confirmatory Factor Analysis Result, Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Variables	Factor Loading	S.E.	T-value	CR	AVE
Customer Satisfaction (S)	0.900			0.811	0.596
S4	0.792	0.041	18.318***		
S3	0.592	0.051	11.178***		
S2					
Brand Reputation (R)				0.933	0.824
R1	0.890				
R2	0.902	0.040	28.557***		
R3	0.930	0.044	25.860***		
Loyalty (L)				0.955	0.878
L1	0.985				
L2	0.976	0.035	30.546***		
L3	0.843	0.028	26.215***		
Emotional Experience (Ex)	0.858			0.918	0.655
Ex1	0.967	0.098	13.849***		
Ex2	0.859	0.122	14.337***		
Ex3	0.760	0.100	15.126***		
Ex4	0.797	0.077	14.871***		
Ex5	0.557	0.078	16.847***		
Ex6					
Electronic Word-of-Mouth (EWM)				0.843	0.519
EWM5	0.744				
EWM4	0.788	.061	17.038***		
EWM3	0.728	.064	15.601***		
EWM2	0.658	.079	11.077***		
EWM1	0.675	.066	12.000***		

Remarks: CR = Composite Reliability, AVE = Average Variance Extracted

*** = Significant at the 0.05 significant levels ($p < 0.05$)



Table 4 Discriminant Validity

Variables	Customer Satisfaction	Brand Reputation	Loyalty	Emotional Experience	Electronic Word-of-Mouth
Customer Satisfaction	0.771				
Brand Reputation	0.572	0.907			
Loyalty	0.595	0.734	0.936		
Emotional Experience	0.604	0.742	0.556	0.809	
Electronic Word-of-Mouth	0.698	0.708	0.643	0.648	0.720

Remarks: The diagonally listed values are the AVE square roots of the variables

Table 5 Goodness of Fit in CFA Testing

Index	Criteria	Result of CFA Testing
CMIN/DF	< 5.00 (Bentler, 1989)	3.523
GFI	> 0.90 (Hair et al., 2006)	0.927
AGFI	> 0.80 (Bentler, 1989)	0.850
NFI	> 0.90 (Arbuckle, 1995)	0.958
CFI	> 0.90 (Hair et al., 2006)	0.969
TLI	> 0.90 (Bentler, 1989)	0.943
RMSEA	< 0.08 (Hair et al., 2006)	0.077

Remarks: CMIN/DF = The ratio of the chi-square value to degree of freedom, GFI = goodness-of-fit index, AGFI = adjusted goodness-of-fit index, NFI = normalized fit index, TLI = Tucker-Lewis index, CFI = comparative fit index, RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation.

Structural Equation Model (SEM)

SEM is an efficient analytical method to test the measurement and the structural regression of models. For studied the causal relationships and tested relationships researcher testing SEMs and modifying the model, the results present model fit index is CMIN/DF = 2.884, GFI = 0.938, AGFI = 0.876, NFI = 0.965, CFI = 0.977, TLI = 0.957, RMSEA = 0.067 as measurable eligible criteria refer to Table 6.

Table 6 Goodness of Fit in SEM Testing

Index	Criteria	Result of SEM Testing
CMIN/DF	< 5.00 (Bentler, 1989)	2.884
GFI	> 0.90 (Hair et al., 2006)	0.938
AGFI	> 0.80 (Bentler, 1989)	0.876
NFI	> 0.90 (Arbuckle, 1995)	0.965
CFI	> 0.90 (Hair et al., 2006)	0.977
TLI	> 0.90 (Bentler, 1989)	0.957
RMSEA	< 0.08 (Hair et al., 2006)	0.067

Remarks: CMIN/DF = The ratio of the chi-square value to degree of freedom, GFI = goodness-of-fit index, AGFI = adjusted goodness-of-fit index, NFI = normalized fit index, TLI = Tucker-Lewis index, CFI = comparative fit index, RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation.

Research Hypothesis Testing

After testing the measurement model, the results of hypothesized are reported in Table 7. All the hypotheses were significant, which implied that in this study H_1 to H_9 were supported.

Table 7 Hypotheses Result of the Structural Model

Hypotheses	Beta Coefficients (β)	T-Value	Test Result
H_1 : Customer Satisfaction \rightarrow Brand Reputation	0.146	3.214***	Supported
H_2 : Customer Satisfaction \rightarrow Loyalty	0.395	6.560***	Supported
H_3 : Brand Reputation \rightarrow Loyalty	0.719	13.223***	Supported
H_4 : Emotional Experience \rightarrow Customer Satisfaction	0.569	9.117***	Supported
H_5 : Emotional Experience \rightarrow Brand Reputation	0.555	9.394***	Supported
H_6 : Customer Satisfaction \rightarrow Electronic Word-of-Mouth	0.494	7.840***	Supported
H_7 : Electronic Word-of-Mouth \rightarrow Loyalty	0.300	3.840***	Supported
H_8 : Electronic Word-of-Mouth \rightarrow Brand Reputation	0.460	7.172***	Supported
H_9 : Emotional Experience \rightarrow Electronic Word-of-Mouth	0.454	9.466***	Supported

Remarks: *** $p < 0.05$

From Table 7, the researcher has able to identify the factors that contribute to loyalty towards Thailand based airlines from this study. All factors hypothesized are supported and one variable has significant influences to another variables. Therefore, factors the directly contributed to customer's loyalty towards the airline are customer satisfaction, electronic word of mouth and brand reputation. All other indirect variables also neither or less contributes to the degree of customer loyalty. The analysis can be summarized as below.

H_1 : Beta coefficients between Customer Satisfaction and Brand Reputation was 0.146 (t-value = 3.214***). Customer Satisfaction has significant influence on Brand Reputation. So, H_1 was supported and aligned with the previous research findings of Winit and Kantabutra (2017) and Serra-Cantalops et al., 2018. Positive customer satisfaction towards the airline services would favorably help the firm sustaining brand image and reputation.

H_2 : Beta coefficients between Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty was 0.395 (t-value = 6.560***). Customer Satisfaction has significant influence on Loyalty. So, H_2 was supported. Findings of Biscaia et al. (2017) identified that customers who are satisfied intent to repeat purchase of a specific brand (product or service) also states that customer satisfaction influences customer loyalty. Those customers who are satisfy with the airline services would tend to repeat their purchase and usage.

H_3 : Beta coefficients between Brand Reputation and Loyalty was 0.719 (t-value = 13.223***). Brand Reputation has significant influence on Loyalty. So, H_3 was supported. This finding reflects past research study of Marcos and Coelho (2018). The higher reputation that firms or the airline has, the greater customer commitment and loyalty towards the firm. Brand reputation has the highest influence to customer loyalty towards the airline, thus it is crucial for the firm to build and sustain brand image and reputation that meet customer expectation.



H₄: Beta coefficients between Emotional Experience and Customer Satisfaction was 0.569 (t-value = 9.117***). Emotional Experience has significant influence on Customer Satisfaction. So, H₄ was supported. The result corresponds with research studies of Jandavath and Byram (2016), Ali *et al.* (2016) ; Ladhari *et al.* (2017) and Hosany *et al.*, (2017). The favorable emotional experiences would show positive connection to customer satisfaction,

H₅: Beta coefficients between Emotional Experience and Brand Reputation was 0.555 (t-value = 9.394***). Emotional Experience has significant influence on Brand Reputation. So, H₅ was supported. This find aligned with Torres and Ronzoni (2018) that positive or negative customers' emotional experiences would influence their responses to the branding of products and services.

H₆: Beta coefficients between Customer Satisfaction and Electronic word-of-mouth was 0.494 (t-value = 7.840***). Customer Satisfaction has significant influence on Electronic word-of-mouth. So, H₆ was supported. Previous studies of Liat *et al.* (2017), Hosany *et al.* (2017) and Thakur (2019) also found that customers who are satisfy with the products or services would spread their experiences or comment to their close ones of relatives, friends and colleagues.

H₇: Beta coefficients between Electronic word-of-mouth and Loyalty was 0.300 (t-value = 3.840***). Electronic word-of-mouth has significant influence on Loyalty. So, H₇ was supported. Opinions and recommendation that consumers received through online sites and social media would influences the degree of loyalty towards the products and services and purchase intention. This finding agreed with Park's (2020) research study.

H₈: Beta coefficients between Electronic word-of-mouth and Brand Reputation was 0.460 (t-value = 7.172***). Electronic word-of-mouth has significant influence on Brand Reputation. So, H₈ was supported. Thus, online reviews, comments and recommendation did not influence only consumer's loyalty, it also influences the brand image and reputation. Positive reviews and comments would strengthen the firm's brand. These reflects that studies of Farzin and Fattahi (2018) and Ghorbanzadeh and Saeednia (2018).

H₉: Beta coefficients between Emotional Experience and Electronic word-of-mouth was 0.454 (t-value = 9.466***). Emotional Experience has significant influence on Electronic word-of-mouth. So, H₉ was supported and illustrate similar finding to research studies of Mohammed and Al-Swidi (2019) ; Mahapatra and Mishra (2017). Favorable experiences that consumers have with the products and services would leads to positive review and recommendation to other consumers online.

Direct, Indirect and Total Effects of Relationships

The processing analysis was analyzed by Baron and Kenny (1986) that the independent variable must impact the mediator as the first equivalence, the independent variable impacts the dependent variable in the second equivalence and the mediator must impact the dependent variable in the third equivalence. That is a complete mediation effect can be clarified using this method. In other words, direct effect implies that an independent directly influences a dependent variable without mediating variables, indirect effect creates partial mediating effects between independent variables and dependent variables. Total Effects of Relationships are the sum of direct and indirect effects.

The results were summarized in Table 8. The researcher used the AMOS program to analyze and the structural equation model of the research are shown in Figure 2.

Table 8 Direct, Indirect and Total Effects of Relationships

Dependent Variables	Independent Variables				
	Effect	Emotional Experience	Customer Satisfaction	Electronic Word of Mouth	Brand Reputation
Customer Satisfaction	DE	0.569***	-	-	-
	IE	-	-	-	-
	TE	0.569***	-	-	-
	R^2	0.324			
Loyalty	DE	-	0.395***	0.300***	0.719***
	IE	0.587***	0.090***	0.331***	-
	TE	0.587***	0.485***	0.631***	0.719***
	R^2	0.550			
Brand Reputation	DE	0.555***	0.146***	0.460***	-
	IE	0.255***	0.227***	-	-
	TE	0.810***	0.373***	0.460***	-
	R^2	0.724			
Electronic Word-of-Mouth	DE	0.454***	0.494***	-	-
	IE	0.281***	-	-	-
	TE	0.735***	0.494***	-	-
	R^2	0.704			

Remarks: DE = Direct Effect, IE = Indirect Effect, TE = Total Effect (DE+IE), ***= $p < 0.05$

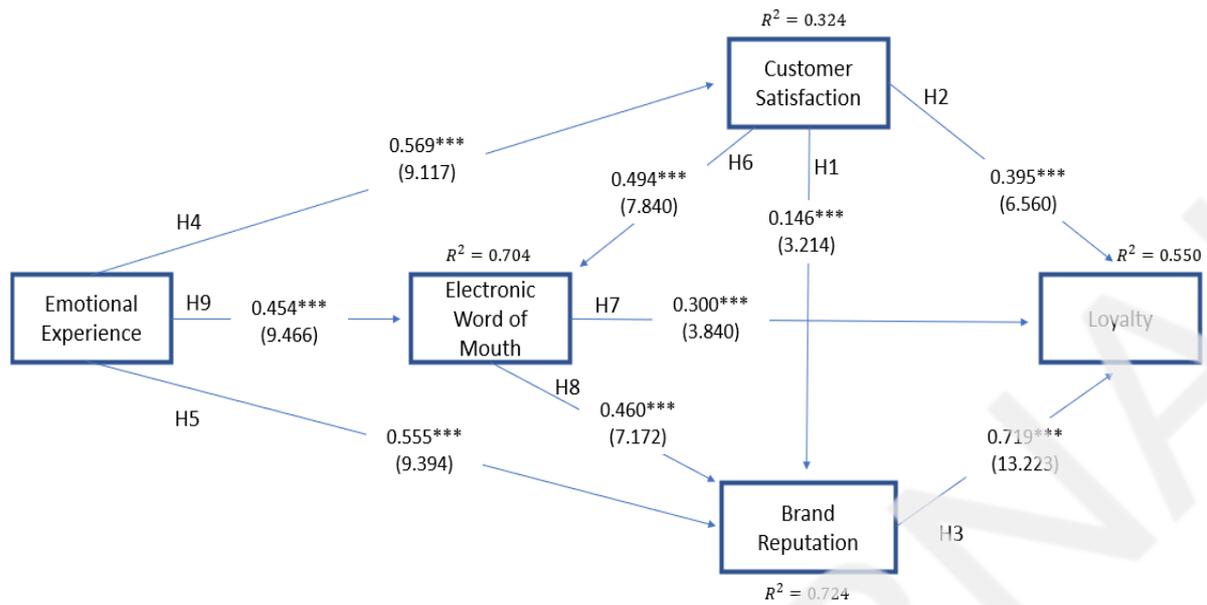


Figure 2 The Results of Structural Model

To further study on which factors influences loyalty, the values presented in the Table 8 can derived with the results as below.

Loyalty: There are direct effect of customer satisfaction on loyalty was 0.395. The significant direct effect of electronic word of mouth on loyalty was 0.300. The significant direct effect of brand reputation on loyalty was 0.719. Whereas there were few indirect effects as emotional experience with an indirect effect on loyalty was 0.587. The indirect effect of customer satisfaction on loyalty was 0.090. Lastly, one of the significant indirect effects of electronic word of mouth on loyalty was 0.331. Therefore, the highest total effect came from brand reputation which was 0.719 as strong and positive effect on loyalty of Thailand based airlines.

Customer Satisfaction: There are direct effect of emotional experience on customer satisfaction was 0.569. There was no indirect effect found, therefore, the direct effects were equal to the total effects. In terms of total effect, Emotional experience is an important variable that significantly influence customer satisfaction towards using Thailand based airlines services.

Brand Reputation: There are direct effect of emotional experience on brand reputation was 0.555. The direct effect of customer satisfaction on brand reputation was 0.146. The direct effect of electronic word of mouth on brand reputation was 0.460. For indirect effect of emotional experience on brand reputation was 0.255 and the significant indirect effect of customer satisfaction on brand reputation was 0.227. So, the highest influence towards brand reputation was emotional experience.

Electronic Word of Mouth: There are direct effect of emotional experience on electronic word of mouth was 0.454. The significant direct effect of customer satisfaction on electronic word of mouth was 0.494. There was some indirect effect of emotional experience on electronic word of mouth was 0.281.

In summary, results demonstrated the results confirmed Loyalty is influenced by a large set of variables and can analyze from different perceptions which was suggested by. While brand reputation has a strong and significant influence on customer loyalty (0.719) and followed by the influence of emotional experience on customer satisfaction (0.569) and also the influence of emotional experience on brand reputation (0.555).



Conclusion

The objective of this research is to identify which factor contributes and has influences to Thai customer loyalty towards Thailand based Airlines. The hypotheses development was created to link with the conceptual framework which examines the role that emotional experience impacts on the electronic word of mouth, customer satisfaction and brand reputation, as factors influencing on customer loyalty. The questionnaires were distributed to Thai passengers who have traveling experience with Thailand based airlines. The data were collected and analyzed by Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) verifying the validity and reliability of the model. Moreover, the influence among variables were examined by Structural Equation Model (SEM).

The results of the study profound that all hypothesized factors of; customer satisfaction, brand reputation, emotional experience and electronic word-of-mouth are directly or indirectly contributing to the degree of customer loyalty towards Thailand based airlines. Therefore, all factors are crucial for firms and marketing practitioners when considering plans and strategies to build and sustain customer loyalty. To be able to focus on particular factors, the influence level to customer loyalty are also studied.

The results are further analyzed to determine factors that significantly influence customer loyalty. Brand reputation has the most direct influence on customer loyalty of Thailand based airlines. The weakest relationships are customer satisfaction and brand reputation. Other relationships have demonstrated that emotional experience, customer satisfaction and electronic word of mouth also have direct influence on brand reputation, due to emotional experience having the highest influence. Moreover, electronic word of mouth is influenced by customer satisfaction and emotional experience, whereas emotional experience also impacts customer satisfaction. To answer the purpose of this research, it can be summarized as there are positive links between emotional experience, customer satisfaction, electronic word of mouth and brand reputation on Thai customer loyalty towards Thailand based Airlines service, but the key factor that has the strong significant influence, is brand reputation.

Recommendation

Research findings revealed emotional experience, customer satisfaction, electronic word of mouth and brand reputation have influential factors that influences loyalty of the customers, of which, brand reputation has the highest influence on customer loyalty. Therefore, the business and marketing strategies of Thailand based airlines or other firms in the services sector should be on tactics that having its objective to enhance brand reputation. For example, to improve their existing Customer Relationship Management (CRM) program or create a new outstanding CRM program to escalate the customer loyalty for sustainable sales, efficient customer life cycle management, assist in decision making support according to company scheme, operational efficiency, cross-selling, up-selling, efficiency distribution channel, value added for goods and services and cost saving.

By better recognizing how airline passengers respect their flying experience, airline traffic planners should employ more efficiency in marketing strategies by providing privileges and better services to exceed customer expectations. When customer recognizes our services are worth their expenses, the higher the degree of satisfaction will create positive electronic word of mouth towards the firm. The issues allow better recognition of customers' expectation of services consistency and service quality and the part of them in customers' satisfaction and completing the electronic word of mouth about the airline association should be addressed and warrant further analysis. Guidelines for the implementation include developing E-service system to respond and support passenger needs. Afterwards, communication more frequently while online



channels such as content of reviews and promote Airline awards. The last one expansion sale channels into E-commerce platform.

Limitation and Further Study

From this research, there are some points shown as limitations of this study that provide directions for future study. According to Thailand based airlines, as an international airline that have both Thai and international passengers, but the snowball sampling collected data only from Thai customers. There might be benefits for other researchers to expand the target groups such as studying on the loyalty towards Thailand based airlines from international passengers, resident foreigners and work permit holders who live in Thailand. Moreover, this research focused on Thais who have experienced only with Thailand based airlines, the perception of the target audience may also have a good experience with other brands. So, it is possible to study more in terms of customers who have experience with other international airlines. Lastly, the factors influencing the variables that have studied in this research can be developed and applied to other sections as service quality and physical evidence that might be overcome in future studies.

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